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SUBJECT: IRISH PRESIDENT McALEESE TACKLES GLOBAL ISSUES IN NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS TO DIPLOMATIC CORPS

¶1. Summary: President of Ireland Mary McAleese addressed diplomats on January 14, delivering a wide-ranging speech focusing on Irish Government policy in regards to conflict resolution, climate change, human rights, overseas development aid, humanitarian crises, nuclear weapons proliferation, poverty and disease, and the progress achieved in Northern Ireland. The President, in the main, expressed views and sentiments compatible with USG policy. We will continue to seek ways to effectively collaborate with the Irish in addressing these compelling global issues. End Summary.

¶2. On January 14, President of Ireland Mary McAleese addressed diplomats representing over 50 countries during her annual presentation of New Year's greetings to the Diplomatic Corps. Calling the diplomats and their families important visible signs that the international community is, indeed, functioning as a community, her wide-ranging speech focused on a wide swath of global issues. She extended thanks, on behalf of the Irish people, to each of the representatives for their efforts in building bilateral relations with Ireland, and for acting as builders of trust and cooperation within the global community.

¶3. Addressing conflict resolution, McAleese expressed hope that the international community would look to the Northern Ireland peace process as an example of a regional conflict where peace was brought about through the building of trust. She noted the recent visits of First Minister Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness to the United States and Brussels, saying that such visits underscore the economic benefits of the peace process -- including foreign investment -- which could be seen already. McAleese thanked the international community for its support and encouragement during the long difficult years of the conflict in Northern Ireland

¶4. McAleese spoke about the threat of climate change, calling for the issue to be addressed both locally and globally. She characterized the recent climate change conference in Bali as hopeful. She called for effective concerted global responses to promote human rights, remove the threat posed by nuclear weapons, and overcome poverty and disease in misery-stricken regions such as the Middle East, Darfur, and Burma. She stated that Ireland, through the expansion of official development assistance and the funding of NGOs, would play its part in alleviating human suffering in many regions of the world, particularly in Africa. (Note: In 2006, Ireland ranked sixth internationally in per capita spending on international aid. End note.) In addition to an expansion of development assistance, McAleese indicated that Ireland would also work to increase voluntary efforts in the developing world. She noted that Irish troops will shortly deploy to Chad as part of an EU peace-keeping mission, and that Ireland supports the African Union's efforts to resolve conflicts in Kenya and Zimbabwe.

¶5. Calling the European Union a story of remarkable success, peace and prosperity, she said she looked forward to a well-informed and constructive debate in Ireland on the EU Reform Treaty ratification process. (Note: Ireland is the only EU nation where a national referendum will be required for ratification. End note.)

¶6. Comment: The President's remarks -- which embodied official Irish Government foreign policy -- covered a broad swath of global issues. In the main, she expressed views and sentiments that are compatible with USG policies -- and that would resonate with most Americans. The post will continue to seek ways to effectively collaborate with the Irish in addressing these compelling global issues.

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